

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USCINCEUR

EUDAC STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 30238

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS' FR, SA, YE

SUBJECT: SAUDI DEFENSE MINISTER'S VISIT TO FRANCE

REF: JIDDA 7657 (NOTAL)

1. ACCORDING TO QUAI ARABIAN PENINSULA OFFICER BELLIVIER, MOST OF THE DECISIONS ON FRANCO-SAUDI ARMS SALES HAD BEEN MADE BEFORE PRINCE SULTAN'S ARRIVAL HERE. HIS NOVEMBER 11-15 OFFICIAL VISIT WAS THUS DEVOTED PRIMARILY TO THE "LOFTY POLITICAL DISCUSSION" WHICH THE ROYAL FAMILY FAVORS ON SUCH OCCASIONS RATHER THAN TO THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF MILITARY COOPERATION.

2. BELLIVIER TOLD US NOVEMBER 19 THAT AGREEMENTS FOR
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THE SALE OF ABOUT TWO BILLION FRANCS OF MILITARY

EQUIPMENT CONSISTING MAINLY OF PANHARD AMX AND AML ARMORED VEHICLES AND MISSILES TO USE WITH THEM WERE SIGNED IN JIDDA BEFORE SULTAN'S DEPARTURE. IN ADDITION, ACCORDS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF FRENCH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE SAUDI GROUND FORCES HAD BEEN CONCLUDED EARLIER.

3. BELLIVIER CHARACTERIZED THESE AGREEMENTS AS THE LOGICAL OUTGROWTH OF EARLIER FRENCH SALES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EFFORTS DATING FROM 1968-70. HE INDICATED THAT SOME 300 TO 400 FRENCH ARMY PERSONNEL ARE TO TRAIN SAUDIS IN THE MAINTENANCE AND USE OF ARMORED VEHICLES AND THAT MOST OF THESE ADVISORS ARE ALREADY AT WORK IN TABUK. BELLIVIER ASSERTED THAT AIRCRAFT SALES WERE NOT DISCUSSED DURING THE VISIT.

4. DURING HIS MEETINGS WITH GISCARD, PM CHIRAC AND MINDEF BOURGES, SULTAN LEFT THE IMPRESSION, BELLIVIER SAID, THAT THE SAUDIS BELIEVE IT IS UP TO THE EGYPTIANS TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY TO BE FINANCED BY THE SAUDI, QATAR, UAE CONSORTIUM. WHILE SULTAN INDICATED THAT THE SAUDIS ARE PREPARED TO COME UP WITH THE MONEY ONCE EGYPT HAS MADE THE NECESSARY ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORT TO CREATE THE INDUSTRY, THEY DO NOT PLAN TO TAKE ANY INITIATIVE THEMSELVES. BELLIVIER DOUBTED THAT THE EGYPTIANS WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE THE REQUIRED EFFORT IN THE NEAR FUTURE GIVEN THEIR OTHER, MORE PRESSING PROBLEMS.

5. IN THE POLITICAL FIELD, PRINCE SULTAN'S VIEWS ON NORTHERN YEMEN WERE THE MOST INTERESTING, BELLIVIER SAID. REGRETTING THAT HE COULD NOT YET SAY MORE, BELLIVIER INDICATED THAT THE SAUDIS APPEAR ANXIOUS TO HAVE SAN'A CHANGE ITS MILITARY SUPPLIER FROM THE USSR TO EUROPE (OR THE U.S.). THE FRENCH HAVE THE IMPRESSION THE SAUDIS HAVE ALREADY TOLD CHAIRMAN EL HAMDI THAT THEY WILL PAY THE BILL IF HE MAKES FUTURE ARMS PURCHASES IN THE WEST.

6. ON OIL, BELLIVIER SAID THE SAUDIS CONTINUED TO DE-CONFIDENTIAL

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CLINE TO SELL AT A MOST-FAVORED-NATION PRICE, THAT IS, AT THE SAME PRICE PAID BY ARAMCO. THE FRENCH ARE NOT INTERESTED IN PURCHASING SAUDI OIL AT THE PRICES PROPOSED, HE ADDED.

7. COMMENT: AS SUGGESTED BY LE MONDE, THE PRESENCE OF A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF FRENCH MILITARY ADVISORS IN SAUDI ARABIA SHOULD FACILITATE FRENCH ARMS SALES IN

THE REGION BY MAKING BOTH PURCHASERS AND THE FRENCH
LESS DEPENDENT ON PAKISTANIS WHO HERETOFORE HAVE PRO-
VIDED MUCH OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TIED TO FRENCH
ARMS SALES IN THE AREA.
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